

South Precinct Email Community Newsletter

April 15, 2008



Dear Community Friends:

Graffiti

Graffiti is marking, drawing, etching (or other methods) on public or private property without the owner's permission, usually done by a person or group seeking recognition. Graffiti is a crime of Vandalism as it results in property damage. Several months ago, we reported there had been a marked increase in graffiti vandalism. Unfortunately, graffiti incidents have been on the rise, which is why we are revisiting this issue.

"Tagger" graffiti (writing the name or "tag" of the individual who put it up) represents the majority of the graffiti on our streets. However, we are also seeing increases in gang related graffiti (gangs "laying claim" to territory or sending a message to rival gangs). This increase in both tagger and gang-related graffiti has been noted city wide, not just in South Seattle. In fact, the North Precinct has had nearly four times as many incidents of graffiti vandalism in the first quarter of 2008 than the South Precinct has experienced. This vandalism occurs mostly in the later evening/early morning hours.

Most of us feel more afraid about the gang graffiti because of the intent behind it. The key is that graffiti needs to be removed regardless of it being gang related, a tag or a mural piece. It's still property damage and needs to be treated as such. The motive behind the graffiti is not important; removing it is.

Who's responsible for the increase? The bottom line is that graffiti vandalism is being committed by our youth, not by outsiders. Know who your children are hanging out with and when. If they are spending many late night hours somewhere other than home, find out where and ask yourself why. Know what they are doing. If your kid has several cans of spray paint, find out what they're doing with it. Hold them accountable.

What follows are some graffiti prevention tips and resource information. This information is courtesy of Seattle Public Utilities. Seattle Public Utilities is the City agency responsible for addressing litter, illegal dumping and graffiti complaints.

Prevent Graffiti - Make your property hard to vandalize

- Remove or paint over the graffiti **immediately**. Removing graffiti promptly is the best way to prevent it from occurring again.
- Install improved lighting and motion sensitive lighting
- Create barriers using vegetation or fencing to ward off potential graffiti vandals.
- Use materials and surfaces that make graffiti vandalism difficult. Apply a clear coat finish to protect painted and unpainted surfaces and use protective film coverings on windows.
- Conduct weekly inspections to help prevent graffiti on your property and in your community.
- Move dumpsters to the ends of the alleys to reduce graffiti. Call dumpster companies and ask them to keep graffiti off dumpsters. (Their phone number is usually on the dumpster.)

Report Graffiti

- If you see graffiti vandalism in progress, **call 911**. Graffiti vandals must be caught in the act to be prosecuted.
- When graffiti appears, whether on your private property or on city/government property, make a police report. Call the Seattle Police Department's non-emergency number, **206-625-5011**.
- Call the City's **Graffiti Hotline** (206) 684-7587, to report graffiti on **public property** (street signs, retaining walls, poles, traffic control boxes, parking meters, bridges, mailboxes, etc.), or graffiti that has not been removed from private property. Be sure to indicate the exact location.
- When graffiti appears on your home, apartment building, or business, take a photo of it to document for insurance purposes.

Remove Graffiti on Private Property

- Quickly removing graffiti is the best way to discourage graffiti vandals. Allowing graffiti to remain invites the vandals to return and do the same to other properties in the area. Property with graffiti that is not removed in a reasonable amount of time may be subject to fines under the Graffiti Nuisance Ordinance.
- **Get free paint.** Gray, white, or beige recycle latex paint, is distributed through the Household Hazardous Waste Program. Call **(206) 386-4093** and specify the color and amount you need.
- Volunteer to paint out graffiti on **private property** in your neighborhood. Business, community, and service groups may apply for a Litter & Graffiti matching fund grant. For more information call **(206) 386-9746**.

Prevent More Graffiti

It's very frustrating to paint over graffiti on your property, only to have it vandalized again. The two best ways to paint out graffiti that will discourage further vandalism:

- The BEST way - Repaint the entire wall. Or paint from the ground up over the graffiti (making a straight line across the top) with a color that matches the wall. This leaves no trace of graffiti and does not draw the attention of the vandals. This method is 10 times more effective than patching.
- When it is not possible to paint the entire wall, use a closely matched color blocked over the graffiti in neat, square shapes. The closer the color match, the more effective it is in preventing further vandalism.

Resource Information *All phone numbers begin with area code (206), except where noted.*

Report GRAFFITI:

in progress:	911
on your property	625-5011
on public and private property:	684-7587
on Metro Transit property	684-1800
on Seattle Parks property	684-7250
on City signs	386-1206
on City bridges & retaining walls	386-4251
on Freeways	(425) 822-4163
(WA State Dept of Transportation)	
Adopt-A-Street Program	684-7647
Free paint & removal information	386-4093
Historic Buildings	684-0228



Seattle Public Utilities Graffiti Rangers, and removal crews from other departments such as Transportation and Parks, remove graffiti from City property. Consistent with the Graffiti Nuisance Ordinance, the City strives to meet the 10-day timetable for removing graffiti from its property.

Graffiti Prevention & Removal Program website:

[http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Garbage/Reduce Garbage & Litter/Graffiti Prevention & Removal/index.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Garbage/Reduce%20Garbage%20and%20Litter/Graffiti%20Prevention%20and%20Removal/index.asp)

Online Graffiti report form:

<http://www2.seattle.gov/util/forms/graffiti/graffitiForm.asp>

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator